



Special Olympics

get into it

education and engagement tools
for teachers and students



Activity 3: 9-12 Lessons

Making a Difference

Activity Overview:

In this lesson, students will reflect on their own perceptions of those with intellectual disabilities. They then will be challenged to complete an extraordinarily challenging task and relate the experience to the frustrations and feelings that those with intellectual disabilities are often faced with daily. Student groups will then complete a jigsaw activity to learn about intellectual disabilities and will watch videos featuring Special Olympics athletes from around the world. Students revisit their initial perceptions to see if and how they've changed. They reflect on what Special Olympics means to athletes and their families, and how it promotes understanding, acceptance, inclusion, and respect for those with different abilities. This lesson would work well in a unit that explores civic responsibility, inclusion, or social justice.

Activity 3: Making a Difference



"I was once very shy and not willing to talk with others. Special Olympics changed my life and my love of sports and helped me achieve all this unimaginable success."

Xu Chuang, Special Olympics China Athlete and International Global

Cross-Curricular Connections:

This lesson extends into language arts, social studies — particularly social justice — health/science, and technology. Students explore how sports can be an equalizer for those who may struggle in other areas. They learn about the physical causes and effects of an intellectual disability. They are challenged to use digital tools to gather, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information about those with intellectual disabilities. The lesson also includes an infusion of videos as part of the learning, and students are encouraged to create a technology-related product in the final assessment that communicates the spirit of Special Olympics athletes.

Academic Skills Addressed:

- Understanding, acquiring, and using new vocabulary;
- Reading, comprehending, and connecting informational texts to prior knowledge;
- Developing new understandings based on informational texts;
- Posing reasoned questions drawn from previous learning and from personal experiences;
- Researching information to gain new understanding of topics;
- Generating informed questions and using an inquiry process to explore a new topic;
- Communicating effectively to audiences about complex topics; and
- Using a variety of techniques for oral presentation.

Desired Outcomes:

Students will:

- Identify characteristics of intellectual disabilities.
- Appreciate the contributions of Special Olympics athletes.
- Synthesize their appreciation by designing an initiative to recognize Special Olympics athletes.

Time Required:

Three to four 45-minute periods



Activity 3: Making a Difference



"Go for the gold,
we keep telling
our athletes.
But it is the
volunteers of
Special Olympics
who walk away
with the gold,
richer for the
experience."

L.Tusak, Special Olympics
Coach and Volunteer

Materials Needed:

- Computer with access to the Internet
- Copies of Reproducible 3.1, *Special Olympics, The Global Movement* and Reproducible 3.2, *Quotes by and about Special Olympics Athletes*
- Chart paper and markers (optional)
- Art materials
- Video equipment (optional)

Background:

- Before implementing the lesson, familiarize yourself with videos of Special Olympics athletes, which you can show students during the lesson. These can be found on the Special Olympics website at: <http://www.specialolympics.org/videos.aspx>
(We would suggest the videos featuring Andy Miyares, Charles Howard, Maicon, and Jua Qi Hui at: <http://www.youtube.com/specialolympicshq>)
- For more information on service-learning and how to implement service-learning experiences in your classroom, review the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide* available for download at: www.specialolympics.org
- Refer to the *Teacher Background: Service-Learning Approach* in this guide (Pages 45-46).

Important Terms:

intellectual disabilities, mainstream, perceptions, social justice



PART ONE



Either I shall
find a way or I
will make one.

Activity 3: Making a Difference

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

1. As students enter the room, challenge them to complete one of the following activities. Tell them that they will have two minutes to complete the assignment. (You may wish to tell them that their answers will count for a grade. This is not true but will help to establish a sense of urgency.)

- a. *Translate the following Latin phrase into English:*

aut viam inveniam aut faciam.

Answer: Either I shall find a way or I will make one.

- b. *Solve the following physics problem:*

A pig is launched at a 43-degree angle at a velocity of 35 m/s. What is the pig's horizontal velocity?

Answer: 23.86

After a few minutes of trying, discreetly distribute answer sheets to some groups but not others. Once time is up, ask students to discuss or journal about their feelings about the exercise. Tell students that these feelings will serve as a springboard for the rest of the lesson and to keep the exercise in mind as they move forward. Ask: *How did the exercise make you feel? Did you sincerely try to complete the challenge? For those that did not get the answer sheets, did it increase your frustration when other groups got the answer and you didn't?* Tell students that these feelings will serve as a springboard for the rest of the activity.

(Educate)

2. After completing the activity, ask students to get out a sheet of paper and write the first thing that comes to mind when you say the phrase, "intellectual disability." (Note: Another option here is to conduct a "whip" activity where you say the phrase, "intellectual disability," and students go around the room quickly and say the first thing that pops into their minds.) Share students' answers and have students draw conclusions about class responses. *Would they characterize most responses as positive or negative? Did responses show weaknesses or strengths? Did they focus on what those with intellectual disabilities "have" or what they "do not have?" How would they describe their existing perceptions of those with intellectual disabilities?* **(Educate, Motivate)**



PART ONE



"I've learned so much from Adam and I'm sure he's learned some from me. If you take the time to make them your friend, they're the same as everyone else."

Tommy Oreste, Special Olympics Youth Summit Participant

Activity 3: Making a Difference

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

3. Ask students to share how they'd define an intellectual disability. Then put the following definition on the board.

According to a definition by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a person is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria:

- *Intellectual function level (IQ) is below 70-75.*
 - *Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas (e.g., communication, self-care, home living, social skills, leisure, health and safety, self-direction, functional academics, community use, and work).*
 - *The condition manifests itself before the age of 18. (Educate)*
4. Ask students if they know anyone with an intellectual disability. If so, encourage them to describe this person and share their experiences with them. Based on what they know, how might the introductory activity connect to the feelings and experiences of those with intellectual disabilities? **(Educate)**
 5. Tell students that this lesson will hopefully broaden their existing perceptions about people with intellectual disabilities. Challenge students to share everything they already know about intellectual disabilities. This list could include factual information, historic perceptions, how people with intellectual disabilities are treated, emotions, etc. Create a list on the board or on chart paper with this information. **(Educate)**
 6. Then challenge students to create a second list with questions for which they'd like to learn the answers. Encourage them to create questions that help to give them a balanced picture of those with intellectual disabilities. **(Educate, Motivate)**
 7. Once the class list has been developed, organize questions into categories or topic areas. Examples might include, "Local, National, International Statistics;" "Causes;" "Historic Perceptions;" "Capabilities;" or "Feelings." Each category will then have a few different questions under it. Challenge each group to select one of the categories/questions to research. Encourage students to use the Internet or print resources; to conduct interviews, if possible, with local organizations, educators, or people with intellectual disabilities; and/or to use observation if available. **(Educate)**

PART TWO



What characteristics do you think describe Special Olympics athletes? Why does it take a special kind of bravery to do what they do?

Activity 3: Making a Difference

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

1. Once student groups have completed their research, mix up the groups so that the new groups include one person from each original group. Have each group member teach or share his/her original group's research with the new group. **(Educate)**
2. Then, have the class come back together and ask students to share something they've learned that has changed or broadened their perceptions about intellectual disabilities. **(Educate)**
3. Ask students to share what they know about Special Olympics. Distribute and have students read Reproducible 3.1, *Special Olympics, The Global Movement*. **(Educate)**
4. Instruct students to watch one (or more) of the videos about Special Olympics athletes, which can be found at:
<http://www.specialolympics.org/videos.aspx>
 After watching, repeat the exercise from earlier in the activity where students shared one word to describe people with intellectual disabilities. *Did the words change? Why or why not?* **(Educate, Motivate)**
5. Then ask:
 - *How do these videos change their perceptions of those with intellectual disabilities?*
 - *What characteristics do they think describe Special Olympics athletes? Why does it take a special kind of bravery to do what they do?*
 - *In what ways do sports and particularly Special Olympics help those with intellectual disabilities to change their perceptions of themselves?* **(Educate, Motivate)**
6. Introduce the term, "social justice" to students. Social justice is about making sure people in a society are treated fairly and justly despite their race, religion, economic or educational status, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and so forth. It is about equality and fair distribution of social values, such as freedom, income and wealth, and the opportunity to take equal part in society. *Do students think that those with intellectual disabilities are always treated fairly and justly in our society? Why or why not? How can sports and Special Olympics in particular help to promote social justice for those with intellectual disabilities?* **(Educate, Motivate)**

Activity 3: Making a Difference

PHOTO BY: Richard Corman



When students think of Special Olympics athletes, what words come to mind? How would they describe the spirit of Special Olympics athletes and the work Special Olympics does?

Reflection:

Challenge students to complete this sentence, “People with intellectual disabilities...”

Suggested Assessment:

When students think of Special Olympics athletes, what words come to mind? How would they describe the spirit of Special Olympics athletes and the work Special Olympics does? Distribute Reproducible 3.2, *Quotes by and about Special Olympics Athletes*. Have students read the quotes. Have them consider how each represents the spirit of Special Olympics athletes. Then challenge them, individually or in groups, to create a project inspired by one of the quotes on the list, or another quote from the Special Olympics website (<http://www.specialolympics.org>). Their project can take any form, including a painting, poster, collage, video, poem, photographic essay, song, or any other creative product. **(Motivate, Activate)**

Cross-Curricular Extensions:

Social Studies

- Students research and report on other groups in your community or nationally that help to promote social justice.
- Students research how access, opportunities, and equal rights have changed for those with intellectual disabilities in the past 25 years. Research can include Internet and print resources and interviews.

Inclusive Classroom Modifications:

- For inclusive classrooms, you may want to alter the difficulty of the activities in the introductory exercise. Activities could be presented with increasing levels of difficulty so that everyone can be successful up to a point. You can also include physical challenges to demonstrate the point.
- For the research section, students with intellectual disabilities can be a resource and share what they’d want others to know about intellectual disabilities. Students can interview others within their own classroom, but they should also be encouraged to research outside the classroom. There is a variety of abilities and strengths among students with intellectual disabilities.
- In Part Two, allow Special Olympics athletes to bring in their medals, photos, videos, and other mementos that demonstrate their achievements.
- Consider including the physical education staff in this activity and playing Unified Sports.

Activity 3: Making a Difference



Invite local Special Olympics athletes, coaches, or volunteers to the class to speak with students about the organization, and the training and experiences of those involved.

General Extensions and Modifications:

- If possible, invite local Special Olympics athletes, coaches, or volunteers to the class to speak with students about the organization, and the training and experiences of those involved.
- Encourage students to follow local athletes as they prepare for their competition in regional and national Special Olympics competitions and hold countdown events to help build excitement and interest.
- Have students imagine that they have been asked to write a speech for the Opening Ceremonies of the 2010 Special Olympics World Summer Games. Have them write a 3-5 minute speech that inspires athletes, reinforces the Special Olympics mission, and captures the spirit of the Games.
- Host a showing of the film, *The Ringer* (<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/theringer>), for the school community.
- Have students research Special Olympics Unified Sports® programs to see if there are ways to get involved (http://www.specialolympics.org/unified_sports.aspx). Or encourage the Physical Education teacher to play a Unified Team Sport during class. Learn more about Unified Sports studies here: http://www.specialolympics.org/research_studies.aspx
 - An Evaluation of a Unified Sports® Football Pilot Project
 - National Evaluation of the Special Olympics Unified Sports Program
- Watch the 2009 Global Youth Rally. Actor Johnny Knoxville, with Eddie Barbanell as his side, both stars of Fox Searchlight's film *The Ringer*, spoke about his genuine friendship with Barbanell. Barbanell exhorted everyone to bury the R-word. "The word that we should use is respect," he said. http://www.specialolympics.org/2009_youth_rally.aspx



Activity 3: Making a Difference



"From now on,
all young people,
both those who
compete as
athletes and
those who serve
with them, can
be a part of the
Special Olympics
family through
SO Get Into It."

Timothy Shriver,
Special Olympics
Chairman and CEO

Additional Resources:

- Background information on Special Olympics:
<http://www.specialolympics.org>
- Additional information about intellectual disabilities can be found at:
<http://www.aamr.org> and <http://www.intellectualdisability.info>
- Be a Fan PSA video (30 sec):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=26663070286>
- 3 Word video (2:45):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=135014990286>
- Inclusion in Panama video (2:29):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=126509085286>
- Running in Africa video (2:37):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=126508045286>
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver Tribute video (3:51):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=220804995286>
- "R word" speech by Soeren (9:52):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=149050755286>
- Family Inspiration video (2:34):
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=129922390286>
- See the Athlete 1st video (31 sec): http://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympics?v=app_2392950137#!/SpecialOlympics?v=app_57675755167
- Joe Jonas Run for Special Olympics video (2:04):
http://community.specialolympics.org/_Joe-Jonas-iWIn-Fun-Run-for-Special-Olympics/video/893530/82244.html
- End the R-word with Joe Jonas video (13 sec):
<http://youtube.com/endtherword>
- Special Olympics Athlete Profiles — Andy Miyares (2:34):
<http://www.youtube.com/endtherword#p/a/1/7Pp0DhKQD8k>



PHOTO BY: Ryan Eades

Special Olympics, The Global Movement

With sports at the core, Special Olympics is a leader in the field of intellectual disability and the world's largest movement dedicated to promoting respect, acceptance, inclusion, and human dignity for people with intellectual disabilities. With programming in the areas of health, youth and education, family support, research and policy change, Special Olympics has...

- More than 3.1 million athletes
- 228 Special Olympics Programs
- 30 Olympic-type summer and winter sports
- 7 regional offices around the world, including Ireland, Egypt, South Africa, Singapore, China, Panama, and the United States
- More than 750,000 volunteers
- More than 300,000 coaches
- More than 30,000 competitions around the world each year

Special Olympics Mission

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics Vision

The Special Olympics movement will transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby celebrate the similarities common to all people.

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, an athlete must be at least eight years of age and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that have required specially designed instruction.

Competition

Special Olympics athletes are divided to compete in categories based on gender, age, and ability level. All Special Olympics activities reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies, and events embodied in the modern Olympic movement. These Olympic-type activities have been broadened and enriched to celebrate the moral and spiritual qualities of persons with intellectual disabilities so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.

Special Olympics, The Global Movement

History and Leadership

Special Olympics began in 1968 with the First International Special Olympics Games at Soldier Field in Chicago. Since then, millions have benefited from the movement.

J. Brady Lum is President and Chief Operating Officer.

Timothy P. Shriver is Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Special Olympics Board of Directors.

The Lead Board Director and Vice Chair is **Stephen M. Carter**, Chief Executive Officer, Superior Essex, Inc., the Board Vice Chairs are **Nadia Comaneci**, Olympic Gymnastics Gold Medalist; and **Raymond J. Lane**, Partner, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded Special Olympics in 1968.

Special Olympics Initiatives

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes™ is an initiative designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness, leading to an enhanced sports experience and improved well-being. Athletes receive health services at Special Olympics competitions, while healthcare professionals learn about the health needs of Special Olympics athletes, gaining confidence in volunteering their skills to an underserved population and thus creating more inclusive medical practices.

Youth and Schools Outreach – Special Olympics is leveraging sports as a platform to teach acceptance and inclusion to young people around the world. Project UNIFY® is a program which builds Special Olympics in schools and is engaging, motivating and activating young people through many existing programs including the **Get Into It** is a K-12 service-learning curriculum, **Special Olympics Unified Sports™** and the “R-Word” campaign which is building respect through language. Global Youth Summits are also held to unite youth from throughout the world in the spirit of change. In addition, the **Special Olympics Young Athlete Program** provides opportunities for young athletes between the ages of 2 ½ and 7 years of age to learn basic sports skills and motor activities to prepare them for Special Olympics competition.

Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs) offer athletes the opportunity to take active leadership roles both on and off the playing field. Athletes serve on the Boards of Directors, officiate competitions, coach other athletes, act as spokespersons and make decisions about the future of Special Olympics.

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a program that brings together people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same athletic team.

Family Support Network gives families support in communities within Special Olympics. Understanding the challenges of raising a special needs child, Special Olympics has created the Family Support Network to provide a connection for families of Special Olympics athletes. There are more than 100 networks in more than 60 countries.

Special Olympics, The Global Movement

Benefits of Special Olympics

Individuals who compete in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills and greater self confidence. They exhibit courage and enthusiasm and build lasting friendships. These life skills enhance their ability to live normal productive lives. More than ever, Special Olympics athletes hold jobs, own homes, go to school and successfully confront life challenges on a daily basis.

Through millions of individual acts of inclusion where people with and without intellectual disabilities are brought together through Special Olympics programs, longstanding myths are dispelled, negative attitudes changed, and new opportunities to embrace and celebrate the giftedness of people with intellectual disabilities are created. Ultimately, the Special Olympics movement can transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby celebrate the similarities common to all people.

Funding

Special Olympics receives funding in support of the movement from individuals, corporations, foundations, government and restricted grants. The vast majority of funding received is from individuals through the Special Olympics direct mail program.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics in the world, made up of more than 85,000 law enforcement officers in all 50 U.S. states, eleven Canadian provinces and 43 countries. Since 1981, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics has raised more than US\$272 million, with a record US\$34 million raised in 2008 alone.



PHOTO BY: Richard Corman

Quotes by and about
Special Olympics Athletes

A rewarding life is filled with challenge: The effort creates fires that temper us and strengthen our spirit. So do not feel pity for me.

Give me a chance.

– Thomas Gathu, Special Olympics Kenya athlete and coach

Disabilities are yet another manifestation of global diversity. Let us always be committed to the fundamental principles of dignity and equality for all human beings.

– Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations

Let me win. But if I cannot win let me be brave in the attempt.

– Special Olympics Athlete Oath

The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it. The right to study in any school? You have earned it. The right to hold a job? You have earned it. The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.

– Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Founder of Special Olympics

My ambition in life is to turn 'no' into 'yes.'
If someone says I can't do something, I want to prove I can.

– Suzanne O'Moore, Special Olympics Australia athlete